

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0000.02 : Tape 2**

Melvyn Goldstein, Editor

**Center for Research on Tibet
Department of Anthropology**

and

**Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio**

©2004

Location of Interview: Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, China

Date of Interview: May 1993

Language of Interview: Tibetan

Interviewed by: Melvyn Goldstein and Tashi Tsering

Name: Setrong, Wangye [Tib. gser grong dbang rgyal]

Gender: Male

Age: circa 73

Date of Birth: circa 1920

Abstract

Setrong Wangye was a member of a rich shungyupa (government taxpayer) family [Tib. gshung rgyugs pa] in Tülung [Tib. stod lung] district. His family had large land holdings with its own miser [Tib. mi ser] or bound peasants/serfs and also held the position of Gyatso gembo [Tib. rgya mtsho rgan po] for the district. In this interview he discusses land and taxes in the old society and his own family's estate and serfs. He also discusses his implementation of trial land reforms in 1956 and the Chinese decision to postpone the start of democratic land reforms in Tibet.

Tape 2

A: I thought that since we had joined the revolution, probably it would not be right to get salary from one side and at the same time plant fields on the other side. The two of us [brothers] had joined the revolution and our youngest brother was going to the Society School and it was definite that he would also join the revolution. So we discussed many times among ourselves questioning what we should do. We had to plant a very large area of fields and work for so many taxes. Some time before that, my older brother had said that how about if we, the government taxpayers (shungyupa), pool some money and set up a primary school. Our household can be the main one to pay all the expenditures and we can also work in that school. We will become cadres and it would be beneficial for the society. So my older brother planned to discuss this with the 5 or 6 richer families there, but we all couldn't get agreement and the school never came about. Then the three of us, who had already joined the Administration Department, discussed what we should do about our family. At that time, there were 12 households under us, so we said that we should give our fields to them.

Q: I heard that you were the first one to divide your land, is that correct?

Q: What year was that?

A: It was in the 8-9th month in 1956, during the harvest. At that time, after we harvested all the fields and taken the crops, we gave the lands to them [the households that belonged to them]. We also probably had 20 some nangsen [household servants].

Q: You said there were 12 households who were farming your lands, right?

A: Yes. Usually, when there was a lot of agricultural work, each household would send 2 people, but when it was not peak work time, they only sent one person per day [as a corvée tax]. However, we were not like the aristocratic (Tib. gerpa [sger pa]) and religious estates (Tib. chöshi [chos gzhis]) because when they came to work for us we gave them quite good food without any fixed limit. My older brother would say we should give them good food. We also give 1 daso of tsamba per day. One daso held 1 dre and 3 phul of tsamba.

Q: How many people would come from each of the 12 households? Did those people belong to you?

A: Yes. They were our miser (bound peasants/serfs).

Q: If they ran away could you go to get them back? If they said that they don't want to work and they want to go to Lhasa, could they do that? Did they have that right?

A: No, they didn't. We, as government taxpayers, would make a complaint to the local government and the district. So if one

household fled, we would tell the district right away and bring back the serfs.

Q: Probably, you also whipped them, right?

A: No. We would bring them to the district and there was a danger that the district would whip them. So like this they [those households] couldn't make a single move. From 1830, these 12 households increased in size until now.

Q: At that time [1830], how many households did you have?

A: I don't know how many there were then because it was many years ago.

Q: Did each of the households have land as the basis for which they worked for your taxes?

A: Each household had 12 khe of land for which they didn't need to pay a lease fee to us.

Q: But they had to provide corvée labor (Tib. ula ['u lag]), right?

A: Yes.

Q: According to my understanding, these 12 households didn't need to provide corvée labor to the outside [the government]; they only had to work for you, right?

A: Yes. They were farming servants working on our fields [Tib. [zhing g.yog].

Q: This was similar to the bound peasants/serfs (Tib. mi ser) on aristocratic estates, right?

A: When you look from outside, it was similar, but internally it was not same.

Q: What is the difference?

A: For the aristocratic and monastic estates, their lands were divided into "don" [Tib. 'don] units, not "gang" [Tib. rkang] units of measurement. One don was equal to 2 gang. The miser of the aristocratic and monastic estates had to provide the chitre (outside tax to the government) [Tib. phyi khral] from one gang and work for the nangtre (inside tax to one's lord) [Tib. nang khral] from one gang. We government taxpayers or shungyupa didn't have to work for both the chitre and nangtre because we had only gang and not a don. So we only had to work for the chitre which was taken care of by my household. My miser didn't have anything to do with the chitre. In short, the aristocratic and monastic estates gave their miser a little bit of land and made them work for both the chitre and also the nangtre. So this is the difference.

Q: Chitre means the horse corvée and the pack animal corvée, right?

A: Chitre means the taxes that the local government imposes.

Q: What is included in the chitre? Was it the horse and pack animal corvée tax (that moved goods from) from one "pony express" station to the next one [Tib. lam thog sa tshigs]? Didn't they have to pay [taxes in] barley?

A: In general, there were taxes in-kind and taxes that should be paid by work [Tib. rkang 'dro lag 'don]. The taxes that should be done by work included sending people and horses, and the taxes in-kind included paying grain and money. Our family had to work and pay for all the taxes in-kind and also the horse corvée tax for 1 gang. The aristocrats got a 1 gang tax exemption for serving the government as officials [Tib. zhabs sdod ngo chag].

Q: [Tashi Tsering said] We, [who were the corvée] dancers of the Dalai Lama's troupe, also had a tax exemption called garchag [Tib. gar chag]. This must be similar, right?

A: Yes. On aristocratic and religious estates the taxes in labor were done by the miser and the taxes in-kind were paid by the estate.

Q: But did the miser of the aristocrats have to work for the chitre as well as for their estate [nangtre]?

A: They had to work for it. In one compares the size of land that the aristocratic and religious estates gave their miser with the size of land that I gave to my miser, the latter [mine] was bigger. I gave them 12 khe of land for each miser, and in addition to that, I gave them 12 khe of land as a lease for which the lease fee was one khe for each one khe of land leased. In total, each household had 24 khe of land, and they also could ask to lease some more fields that were near to their land.

Q: Could they sell any of the 12 khe of [their] land to the other miser?

A: No, they were not allowed to sell it. But they could lease it to their relatives.

Q: If a household had 3 sons and they each separated instead of taking one bride for all of them, could they [the household] divide their land?

A: Yes they could, but they had to ask us as a formality.

Q: On some chōshi [religious estates], I heard that they didn't let them do this since it divided the land of the miser. They make one of them keep the land and the other two to become dūjung. Was that true?

A: Yes, there could be such things.

Q: Did you do that in your place?

A: Not on my land.

Q: If the three sons got separated [set up their own neolocal households], they had the right to divide the land, right?

A: Yes, they did. They could get separated and divide the 1 gang of land and they could have 1 gang [12 khe] for each and it would better for us.

Q: So you had to give them more land, right?

A: Yes. We had lands ready to be given because we had a lot of land. In our set up, if one of the 12 households split off [from their natal household], they would ask to become a nangsen or "household servant." There were many cases like this and this was considered good because normally when they came to work for us for one day, we would give them tsamba, tea and dishes like radish and potato for lunch with meat. Furthermore, if they became a nangsen, it was regarded as quite good. Nowadays, we criticize the nangsen as being the worst kind of serf [in traditional society], but our nangsen were not the worst because they got 18 khe of barley for making tsamba [a year]. And they didn't have to pay anything for roasting and milling the barley. Everything was done by us. And they got one set of clothes - a chuba, shirt, pants and boots for each year. Although the quality was not very good, it was made of pure wool.

Q: You might have summer clothes and the winter clothes, right?

Q: No, we didn't. Just one full set of clothes for a year. Regularly, there were 2-3 weavers who would always weave the servants' clothes. So if one became a nangsen, one didn't need to worry about food and clothing and they just had to do the farm work [on our land].

Q: Where did they stay?

A: They would stay in our house.

Q: So they were servants, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you give them the food dishes and drinks in addition to the barley salary?

A: They also get thugba [Tib. thug pa] soup in the morning and evening. This was boiled in a very big pot.

Q: This was given without limit, right?

A: Yes.

Q: That's not bad, I mean.

A: That's why when they didn't get along well in their family, they would ask to become a nangsen. If it was on an aristocratic or monastic estate they had to bring their own food, tea and chang with them [when they came to work]. The estate didn't give them even a drop of water when they worked.

Q: Actually, the düjung were the people who had split off from their (natal) family, right?

A: No. They were beggars who came from outside of the area.

Q: I also heard that the best-off miser were the miser who were government taxpayer serfs.

A: Yes. However, in many documents it is said that the nangsen were the worst off and didn't have any individual freedom. Although they didn't have much individual freedom, when they got sick, my brother would send them to see the doctor right away and also performed rituals for them and let them take a rest.

Q: They won't let them die because they have a sense of compassion, right?

A: Yes, this was from the religious side.

Q: Could one of your nangsen say that he doesn't want to be a nangsen and say he is leaving?

A: If they would ask for leave, we would ask them what would they do and where would they go? But there was no way to go. If they would go to another chöshi estate, they would treat them worse, so they wouldn't go [somewhere else] to suffer [there], right? [Laughs]

Q: There might have been some people who ran away, right?

A: Yes, there were a lot.

Q: I mean from among your nangsen.

Q: Yes. There were some of them who got together with some girls like wanderers and ran away with them, but no one asked to leave.

Q: And there also might be some people who felt that they couldn't tolerate the exploitation and the oppression any more?

A: Yes. There were a lot of them. In the beginning, our household became very big with many members. Then, in 1830 it split into 2 households. We were the main one with my grandfather. The other one became the branch or surpa [Tib. zur pa] with two of my other grandfathers. We divided up the tax obligations. We kept 2/3rds and they got 1/3rd. Then the surpa household again split into two households during my grandfather's time. But at that time they left all the grain loans with the main household. Similarly, there were miser households that got separated.

Q: If a household had 3 sons and if the father said that he and one of his sons will stay home and keep 90% of the land and give 5% to each of the other two sons, did the father have this kind of power?

A: The father would not have that much power. They would have to report this to the boss [Tib. sbyin bdag]. In our time there were some people who ran away and didn't come back at all. Some couldn't manage by themselves and ran away and then came back.

Q: If a household ran away and came back would they get land?

A: They could get the land again or they could ask to become a nangsen. Also some of our nangsen took the land and stayed.

Q: If they did something wrong, did you have the power to whip them?

A: No, we were not allowed to do that.

Q: If there was no whipping, what about hitting them with a piece of the flat leather on their cheeks [Tib. ko lcags]?

A: No. We didn't have the things for punishing people. If there would be a very disobedient young servant, then we would tell him, "You are not listening to us at all. So I will hand you over to the dzong." We didn't have the right to whip people. This was prohibited in the edicts [Tib. rtsa tshig] because this would become settling out of court illegally [Tib. khirms sa bar gcod], right? Actually, the aristocratic and monastic estates didn't have that right, but they would do it a little bit because the people couldn't say much because [answer not finished]

Q: [Tashi Tsering said] My home was in the upper part of the land of an aristocrat (gerpa) called Nyelung [Tib. snye lung]. We had one and a half gang. We [our family] had to do the chitre (outside tax) for Namling Dzong. When I became a [Dalai Lama's] dancer [Tib. gar phrug pa], we were exempt from paying the taxes from one gang of our land. But we had to work for the nangtre (inside tax) for the estate that belonged to Nyelung. If the miser didn't obey them [the estate/lord], they would whip them and also hit them with the flat leather. Although the main aristocratic family members did not live there, the managers and stewards would whip them. My father was also hit with the flat leather.

A: The monastic and aristocratic estates had the right to exercise legal jurisdiction over their own subjects [Tib. khirms 'go rang btsan]. The monasteries who owned the monastic estates also have the variegated legal stick [Tib. khirms rgyug] and they had the land tenure document [Tib. bka' gtan] that indicated their right to exercise legal jurisdiction. We didn't have such a land tenure document and the right to give whippings. If we whipped people without this, and if the district would cause us trouble, we would have to pay a fine in money and give a ceremonial scarf [to apologize].

Q: Did all 12 household of yours have the same amount of land?

A: No. Some asked for more land as they had more family members and we gave it to them. And some said we can't plant that much land, so please take some back.

Q: If you gave them more land, what kind of taxes would they have?

A: They had to pay one khe of barley [as the lease fee] for each one khe of land.

Q: So they didn't have to do corvée labor.

A: No.

Q: So the corvée labor (ula) was done not according to the amount of land they had, right? I mean some had more land and some had less, but they worked for the corvée labor (ula) in the same way, right?

A: The basis for doing the corvée labor was the 12 khe of land. This was fixed. If a household would say that we will take an additional 12 khe and we will do the corvée labor that goes with this land, then we would give them the land. If they asked to lease land, then we would give that and then they paid 1 khe per 1 khe of land.

Q: For this 12 khe of land, would they have to send one person or two persons per day?

A: They had to send 2 people in spring and autumn [planting and harvesting time], but regularly they sent one person. Sometimes if there was no work, then we told them not to come for couple of days. If we just called them even we didn't need them, we had to give them the daily food.

Q: Did they have to send one person for 1 khe of land or what?

A: No, they had to send 2 people for the 12 khe of land. We had 12 household so they send 24 people at busy times and we also had about 20 nangsen. So at peak work times, we had between 30-40 people working.

Q: If a household split into 2, each with 6 khe of land, then how did they work?

A: Then it was the same. If they had to send 2 people, each of them would send one person. And regularly when they has to send 1 person, then they would send 1 person on alternate days.

Q: Can you now tell us about the trial land reforms of 1956? What plans did they make and what work did your office do, and what did your household do at this time?

A: After the County Administration Department was set up, mainly the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region [PCTAR] told our office that we should quickly do experimental land reforms. We had about 17 cadres and counting the cooks, etc., there were about 20 people. The first thing we did was make a study. We studied the party's regulations [Tib. sgrig yig] and the constitution and mainly the Common Programme and the Party's policy towards Tibet. This took a few months. At this time, a letter came from the PCTAR saying that there are 3 sections in Tshede Dzong. Mainly there are the farmers, the nomads and the agro-pastorals who were the bound peasant/serfs of the estates belonging to the government, the aristocrats, and the religious estates of monasteries and lamas. After the democratic reforms, our district was made into 3 qu [sub-counties]. We were told to check and find out the population in Tshede District regardless of whether they are old, young, laymen, or monks. And [we were told to find out] what is the standard of their livelihood, how much land do they have and how much pastures do the nomads have. We needed to make a detailed list of these.

We then had a meeting for a week about this and studied this document and discussed about how the work should be done. Then we discussed about which would be the easier and which would be the harder to work with. Between the aristocratic estates, religious estates and the government taxpayer serfs, we found that among the aristocrats, the Seshing Estate that belonged to Yabshi Taktse would be the hardest. There used to be an Amdo nated Phuntso who was said to be related to the Dalai Lama. Later, there was a Tsangba Jola [Tib. gtsang pa jo lags] who was from the Tsang area. At that time, Phuntso had taken possession of the land of an extinct government taxpayer serf family in Mang Namse [tib rmang nam sras] and he built a house and stayed there. [However, although] he stayed there, he was the main controller of the Seshing Estate, although there was also an estate manager from Tsang. So we were saying that it would be very difficult to talk with Amdo Phuntso. After we discussed who would be better to talk to him, all of us told my older brother to go to talk to Amdo Phuntso. The worst among the religious estates was Tshurpu [Tib. mtshur phu]. Although the Karmapa Lama was the leader of the Buddhist Association of China [Tib. rgyal yongs chos tshogs], Tshurpu was one of difficult ones. So they told me to go to do that estate. We decided to work on the harder ones first.

Q: Do you mean hard to investigate?

A: When we go to do the investigation, they were people who didn't like the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Q: In what month was that?

A: It was at the end of the 1956.

So we were sent to do the investigation. The next hardest estate was the Gyümei [Monastic College]'s estate because the Lama Gyüpa instigated a lot. They also didn't listen. They were the third [hardest] on our list. Actually, we can lead the masses wherever we want to. Their livelihood was very difficult, so what they want is just a better livelihood. There wasn't any political problem.

We made three teams. My brother went to the Seshing Estate, I went to the bound peasant/serf of Gyümei's estate and Tshurpu. The main task was to find out the number of people, the amount of land and the amount of loans. We made a detail list of these things. When 5-6 of us went to Tshurpu, we first went to Nenang [Tib. gnas nang] Monastery where there was a very holy and good lama who was also old. So we were wondering whether this lama was opposing the revolution or not, so we had to go to make propaganda to him. First we went to the gembo (headman) of the estate belonging to the monastery. We stayed over night and relaxed. When we talked with the headman and serfs, they were very obedient.

Q: What did you tell them?

A: I told them that we were told to make a list of the number of people, the size of land and their livelihood. The reason for doing this is that when the land reforms will be done, we need to send veterinarians and doctors according to the number of people and we have to support the people financially, and establish schools according to the number of children. For this we have come to investigate based on an order from the Tibet Autonomous Region. I was friendly with the headman of Khartö [Tib. mkhar stod] because we knew each other from working on taxes. Then we said that we want to seek an audience with the lama who was staying on the mountain.

So we, 4-5 people, went to meet the lama with a khata scarf and some money gifts like 10-15 yuan. The lama told us to sit down and have some tea. What we told him about the propaganda was, "This is according to the order from the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region which said we have to do this work all over the area, so we have come here to investigate and make a list of things." The Lama was a very nice person and said, "If the CCP is doing this work to benefit the people, it would not be okay at all if we caused any hindrances."

Q: How old was the Lama?

A: The lama was about 40.

A: The Tibet Work Committee was doing the work in accordance with the 17-Point Agreement. In the Agreement, it was written that the monasteries and the chöshi (monastic estates) shall not be harmed. Internally, it was said that these will be redeemed [Tib. blu nyo] [paid for when confiscated]. So I told the lama whatever we knew about these things and my colleagues also kind of supported me. The Lama said, "This is very good. You are familiar with the taxpayers and miser and you are acquainted with them, so go ahead and do whatever you want to do with the miser." Then we gathered the miser and talked with them and started

making the lists.

Q: Did the miser ask you what this is about?

A: Yes, they did a little bit. And they asked us what are you going to do. However, we had prepared the answers in advance. Although we didn't have anything detailed from the Tibet Autonomous Region we had a kind of thorough discussion and we told the people, "Making the list of people was for starting hospitals and schools, and the list of animals and asking about the livelihood was for giving relief. And making lists of the land size was for doing the land reforms." Most of the miser didn't ask anything and they respected it, but a few did and we gave this answer. Then after this preparatory work, we started making the lists among the miser. We asked the treba (taxpayers), nangsen (household servants), and the düjung. The ones who could ask questions asked the questions and the ones who could write made the list.

Q: You investigated all the treba, nangsen, and the düjung, right?

A: Yes, we investigated all the people in that county regarding their livelihood and the population and ages of the people.

Q: Do you remember what the population of that place was then?

A: I don't remember. [Laughs]. Then we went to the Nagar [Tib. sna dkar] Estate which was a religious estate of Tshurpu monastery and made the lists there. I did the investigation for 1/3rd of that county. Nagar was the largest estate of Tshurpu. There was a headman called Chögye [Tib. chos rgyal]. When we went to that headman, he said, "Oh, first you should get permission from the Labrang and then we will do whatever you say." He was not to be blamed. So we didn't stay over night there and went directly to Tshurpu Monastery and they made a kind of reception for us. They really had the appearance of being a big [rich] household. The manager's office was on the first floor and the lama's was on the 4th, and they had a telephone between the two. The manager was a relative of Karmapa (the lama). When we explained our goals to him he said, "The Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region is something generic and Karmapa is one of the leaders of the National Buddhist Association." He was implying that he himself was also some kind of member in it. He was kind of defiant or impolite [Tib. sbom thag gcod].

We had gotten experience from Nenang on the day before this, so then we told him that we wanted to ask for an audience with the Karmapa Rinpoche. Then the manager called the Lama and he said it was okay for us to come in now. We went and each of us gave a khata scarf and an envelope with some money like 10-15 yuan according to the religious tradition, and we prostrated and sought his hand blessing. The Lama said, "Are you all well?" He said this in a tactful manner. but he didn't tell us to sit.

Q: How old was the lama?

A: He was about in his 20s. He had a dark face and was fat.

Q: Later, he left [Tibet] with about 50 some riders, right?

A: Yes, there were about 50 riders. He collected all of his things and left. We wanted to make propaganda to the lama, but we didn't get a chance to do that. The lama kept us standing and talked to us about religion. Then we stayed for a while and finally we said, "We have come to do an investigation and we have to report about this." Then he said, "Oh, well discuss it with the manager's office." Then we just had to leave. At that time the Tshurpu Lama was very prosperous and I heard that he had been to China several times. His satin cushions were very good and all of the ceilings also had good quality Chinese brocade. Then when we went down and we saw an Indian Acharya wearing yellow robes and having long hair and also there was a Bhutanese lady there. Probably she was Ashe Chödrön [Tib. chos sgron]. Then when we talked with the manager (the chandzö), he said, "You don't have to make the list, we will do it."

Q: How old was the manager?

A: He was also quite young; in his 30s. Then he told us to relax in a large room and they entertained us well and served us food and tea. But we couldn't make the propaganda well.

Q: When you talked with the manager, did you tell him clearly about the land reforms?

A: Yes. We told him all about that. Our main propaganda was that in the 17-Point Agreement it said there would be no harm to the aristocratic and religious estates, so we explained that clearly in our discussion with all of them. No matter how many times we told him, he said that you don't need to do the investigation. We stayed that night and discussed this in detail and the next morning we went to the manager's office and said, "It is okay if you could make the list, but we have no choice but to make a propaganda meeting for the masses about the content of the documents of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region." At this point, I spoke a little bit more forceful. So he couldn't refuse this. They might have thought that if we talked with the headman ourselves, they might yield to us because I used to deal with them on the taxes in the past. So they called a meeting of all the people regardless of whether they were old or young, and I explained about the document and the 17-Point Agreement.

Q: Do you mean all the people in Tshurpu, right?

A: Yes, there were many people living below the monastery who were not treba (taxpayer serfs). On that night, we returned to the Nagar Estate. Since the headman there was kind of close to us, I told him all about what the manager said regarding making the list and I told him, "There is no choice but to make the list and you should make a clear list. If the manager's office says something to you about this, you just blame it on me and say that we came here on behalf of the district and we gave you the order to do this." Then we called all the miser there and made the list and then also made the list in the other places like Nampa which was an estate that belonged to Drepung. We didn't have any problems.

Q: How did you make a list of the religious estates since the miser didn't have anything to do with it?

A: I had the Land Enumeration Settlement (document) that had been made in the Iron-Tiger year [1830] in which the number of taxable fields (Tib. tregang [khral rkang]) were clearly listed and I also had the local headman who knew all about that. And we all were quite familiar about the estates. We also asked some elderly people about this as if we were just chit-chatting and not saying that this is a government order. [We would ask casually], "How many khe of land does your estate have?" They told us the number of khe. Although it was up to them whether or they would tell us the number of people, they didn't have any choice but to tell it because we had made the propaganda about this and we also used some kind of force using the authority of the district of the local (Tibetan) government. Then we went to Tölung Dechen and we made a summary of this. We were able to make a clear list of all the estates and the miser except the miser living near to Tshurpu monastery. There were no taxpayers there and those miser were mostly wanderers and ones who came to practice religion.

Q: These were the people who served the monastery, right?

A: Yes.

Q: They were nangsen?

A: Yes. There were nangsen there also.

Q: There were also people fetching water and those things and some of them would pitch tents, right?

A: Yes. There were many of these people who pitched beggar's tents and there were also people who came from the north and Kham and from everywhere. When we discussed what to do with Tshurpu to get this information, we decided to call one of the well-off household living near the monastery who knew a little bit of writing. He told us about the people living there with the exception of the visitors who just stayed for 10 some days. When we summarized this, we learned that there were a little more than 50,000 khe of land under this district and there were a little less than 10,000 people. So if we did the land division, each person would get about 5 khe of land on average. However, in Tshurpu, there were more people and less land than in other places where there was more land and less people.

Q: In some places, even if you sowed more seed, the yield would be less. For example, some got 10 khe yield [for one khe planted] and some got about 4-5 khe from 1 khe of land. Did you consider this in your investigations?

A: At this time, this was just the preliminary or rough kind of preparatory work for the land reforms, so it was okay if we could make a document like this. When we made the conclusion, we decided not to go to the monasteries and nunneries to count the number of monks and nuns. This was also an order from the government, so we didn't go to the monasteries. But we had the list of some households who said that they have made their son a monk in Tshurpu or Nenang Monastery. When we made the summary, we could make the list of people and amount of land and something about their income and livelihood, like [classifying them as] rich, middle, and poor.

Q: Do you recall how much of the land was in the hands of the miser?

A: Yes, I remember that very clearly. We regarded it important to count how many fields the estates had and how many the miser had. We asked each miser households how much of the best, the middle, and the worst quality of the land they had. This we got well because we needed to know the livelihood condition of the miser.

Q: Do you remember the percentage of the land that the aristocratic and religious estates had and the percentage that the miser had from the total number of the 50,000 khe of land?

A: Yes, I remember this in principle. In general, the estates held the better and the majority of the land and the miser held the worse quality of the land. And since the miser didn't have a good condition and could not take good care of the land, the quality of land might not be good. As for the religious estates, they had 1 don = 2 gang, and the miser should have 1 gang and the estate should have 1 gang. But the estate had a little bit more because when a miser family became extinct the estate would take back the lands of the extinct households. When they have to set up a new miser household, they would give them this land.

Q: For example, concerning the miser of the religious and aristocratic estate, if they divided the land during democratic reforms, they would get great profit because they will get the fields from the estate. But the taxpayer families wouldn't get the benefit since they had to share the land they held with the düjung? Is this correct?

A: For example, in my case there were 12 miser households and a few düjung households and 20-30 nangsen. Wait, let me get back to the main story or I'll forget it.

When I came to the Tibet Autonomous Region to submit the summary report, we reported to the Lhasa Branch office of the Tibet Work Committee. It was written in Tibetan with my hand writing and we reported that we couldn't investigate in the monasteries, but we investigated the religious estates. They liked it and praised it saying that it was the best of the several districts [which were also doing this]. Some of the districts were able to make a summary report and some couldn't. So we thought that we were kind of great, and then we went back.

In 1957 at the Mönlam Prayer Festival when the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were about to return from India, Kündeling Dzasa came to me and said that the Dalai Lama is coming this way and will stay one day at Mang [Tib. rmang], so you have to take the responsibility for the accommodation arrangements. Actually, it was just a short distance to reach Lhasa, but they were going to give a party to all the government officials and Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region people who were with them. At that time, the Laja and Trede [Tib. 'phral bde] offices told me to make a list of how many monks there were in each monastery so they could give them each alms. So I got the lists of the monks for our office through this. At that time, Trekhang Samchok La was there in the Laja Office.

Q: At that time he might have been a Tsendrön.

A: Was he?

Q: Yes.

A: At that time, the Trade Office wanted to send us a capable person as the representative of the district, and I was told to go since Gyentsen Phüntso had other work to do. When I went there they told me that the Dalai Lama is going to give alms of about 1-2 white yuan [dayan?] to the monasteries. So you must bring a list of the number of the monks in the monasteries right now. It was convenient to get that list because all the monastic officers (Tib. lene) of the monasteries were available to make the accommodation arrangements for the Dalai Lama. Then I called them and told them to bring the lists of the number of monks and it won't do if you put extra numbers or put less. I submitted the list to the Laja and Trade Lekhang Offices. Then I went to my office and told Director Liu and Gyentsen Phüntso that surreptitiously I had obtained the list of the monks in the monasteries.

Q: You were very lucky to get your revolutionary work done, right?

A: After the Dalai Lama's visit was over, I got the things to report in Lhasa. In the morning when the Dalai Lama was about to leave, the people who worked on the accommodation arrangements were called for an audience with him. At that time, Director Liu told me, "This time, you have to say some nice things to him [Dalai Lama]." I said that this is just an audience and I won't get a chance to talk. But he still told me that I should talk if I get the opportunity. I was right. The next day when we went there, all the tent pitchers of the local government were called there and there were the tents with the tiger skins and leopard skin pitched up there. And when we were given the audience we gave a khata and an envelope with money and we got his hand blessing in return. At that time, there was nothing to talk about to the Dalai Lama. What we got was the list of the monasteries as nobody was paying attention to that.

At that time, I took the responsibility of making the accommodation arrangements for the Dalai Lama and I did it in a very strange way. Otherwise the miser would have had to suffer a lot. I said, "This time, since the County Administration Department is set up, we will do it in a new way. We did a thorough investigation internally and, for example, there were many monk officials who belonged to Drepung, so I told the estates that belonged to Drepung to make the arrangement for the monk officials who belonged to Drepung. I thought that this would be better. [Laughter].

Q: You handed them over to those estates, right?

A: Yes. Similarly, I also sent the aristocratic officials who had a very good relationship with the Lama Gyüpa to go to the estates of the Lama Gyupa. And I also handed over the aristocratic officials like Ngabö to the estates that belonged to the aristocrats. [But] there weren't many aristocratic estates in that area.

Q: Which of the aristocratic estates were there in that area?

A: in the upper part [of the district] there was the estate of Möndrong and there was the Seshing Estate and estates of Changöpa and Ringang. In the past, they would check the number of tregang (tax fields) there and divide them among the tregang in the area and the masses there had to make the arrangements [based on this]. Doing this, I was able to arrange it very nicely. And since the taxpayer families didn't have much to do, I made them help the tent pitchers and do some other work.

In that district, the district head was Gyentsen Phüntso, and we could tell him whatever we had to. I told him that the district should give me a little bit of land. Normally, the district had about 400-500 khe of land. Originally, this land didn't belong to the district but it was the land of the shungyupa {government taxpayer serfs}, but since they had the power they just held it. Normally, when they irrigated the fields, until the district's lands were irrigated, the other miser were not allowed to irrigate their own fields. Then I told Gyentsen Phüntso that this should be changed first because the district was managed by the government and Gyentsen Phüntso was the Director of the Administration Department. He asked me what would be better to do? I said, "Usually there are the best, middle, and the worst fields and some of them should be irrigated first and some of them should be irrigated later on. So we should irrigate the district's fields and the miser's field in an equal way according to the quality of the fields." He accepted this and since then the fields of the district and the fields of the miser were irrigated in an equal way and this worked out very well.

Q: Was this in 1957?

A: Yes. It was at the beginning of 1957. Normally people were not allowed to graze animals around the fields in summer. This was beneficial for all the fields. Also in the past, when they would irrigate the fields in summer, the miser were not allowed to irrigate their fields until the district's fields were irrigated, but I made it that all the fields were could be irrigated equally in summer. The miser appreciated this very much.

At the time of the harvest, usually when it is time to harvest, all the miser around that area would have to harvest the district's fields for 3 days. They would get some tsamba, a beverage, and also a little bit of money. The better district heads would slaughter a yak and give them food dishes from its meat. This was called the lord's harvest [Tib. dpon btsas]. The district's harvest would be finished in three days, Then the miser could do their own harvest. I also made this equal so that whichever crop ripens and is ready to be harvested, it will be harvested first regardless of whether it is the district's field or the miser's field. If the miser's fields ripen first, they will harvest it by themselves and if the district's fields ripens first, we, the 12 households, will harvest it. Whatever I told Gyentsen Phüntso about these changes, he would say okay. The miser again appreciated this very much.

At the beginning of 1957, just before the Dalai Lama returned from India to Tibet, my older brother went on a tour to visit China. At that time, I was working in the Administration Department as much as I could. It was at this time that the government announced the 6 year postponement of [land] reforms. Probably, this was announced from India when Premier Zhou came to India. As soon as this was announced, the anti-communist people in the district got really happy, as if it was daybreak for them.

Q: At that time, you people might have felt small/inferior [Tib. nyam dma' po], right?

A: Yes. We had a very hard time. They would say, "Those running dogs of the Chinese who get the dayan silver coins have now become like a dog that couldn't cross the shallow part of the river [Tib. khyi rab la ma thar ba]." [i.e., impotent] As for the people like us who divided our lands and gave it to the people, they made fun of us saying, "You have already divided the lands and now you will have to remain under the local government unwillingly like the proverb, 'Even when one feels hot unwillingly, one was made to sunbathe' [Tib. ma 'dod tsha ba 'tshig kyang nyi ma sro dgos shar pa red]." This proverb really remained clear deep in my brain. It means that even though we didn't like the leadership of the local (Tibetan) government, we had to take it. Those who accepted the revolution were saying, "Now it is all finished [Tib. da dpe bsags song]."

Q: When did you decide to make the reform to irrigation? Was it before the postponement of the land reforms or after that?

A: It was before the postponement of the reforms.

Q: [Tashi Tsering said] At that time, you had no choice but to stop the reforms because you became like the proverb, "The dog broke its front leg [Tib. khyi lag pa chag pa]," right?

A: Then some leaders of the Tibet Autonomous Region arrived in the district. They said that the County Administration Department should be contracted in size [Tib. khu bsdu] because there has been a postponement of the reforms. So the cadres and the workers in the office have three principles [options]: 1. You can resign from being a cadres and return home; 2. You can go to Lhasa to study; 3. You can go to China to study.

Q: They said that government will pay the expenses, right?

A: Yes. [They said] It is up to you what you do. Most people said they will go home. When we held a meeting and announced the content of the document, the cadres of the Civil Administration who had come from Lhasa asked what they were going to do through an interpreter. Most of the cadres said that we will respect [abide by] the order to contract the offices according to the policy. Each person said I am going home, as if one was imitating the other. Most of them said that they are going home. At that time, my brother was not there, but I was there and finally they asked me what am I going to do? I [said] I will do whatever the Chinese Communist Party tells me to do. They said, "You shouldn't say that because we gave you the right to make your own choice." Then I said, "This time, I am not going to make the decision because at the time when I joined," [end of side B of tape]